

VZCZCXRO0143
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHRN
DE RUEHMR #0642/01 3611059
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 271059Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3493
INFO RUCNSAD/SADC COLLECTIVE
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 3894

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000642

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/S, IIP/SEG (KARA BREISSINGER)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KDEM](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: SPEAKER PROGRAM EVALUATION - DR. STEVEN LIVINGSTON

REF: BREISSINGER-SMITH E-MAIL (10/19/07)

MASERU 00000642 001.2 OF 002

11. SUMMARY: From December 10-15, Embassy Maseru hosted media and public affairs expert Dr. Steven Livingston, a professor of Political Communication at George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs (SMPA), for a series of workshops with Government of Lesotho officials, journalists, and civil society leaders to plan an overhaul of the GOL's communications strategy. The program came at a timely point in the history of Lesotho's media development, as conflict between opposition and governing parties coupled with a lack of adequate state communication has created suspicions between the government and press corps. As Lesotho's media becomes bolder, the lack of sufficient information from the GOL creates a vacuum often filled with rumor and inaccuracies. Throughout his intense, highly targeted schedule, Dr. Livingston sought to create a working communications strategy to encourage GOL outreach. We rate Dr. Livingston's program highly and recommend him for future speaking engagements. We believe that his program may have significant long term benefits for GOL communications policy, and thus, communication generally in the mountain kingdom. END SUMMARY.

12. Below is Embassy Maseru's official review of Dr. Steven Livingston's program:

1A. NAME OF SPEAKER AND DATE OF PROGRAM

NAME: Dr. Steven Livingston, a George Washington University professor of Political Communication at the School of Media and Public Affairs (SMPA) and the Elliot School of International Affairs, as well as a research professor in the Political Science Department.

PROGRAM: Dr. Livingston conducted a program on government communication strategy and media tradecraft in Maseru, Lesotho, on December 10-15, 2007.

1B. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TOPICS, VENUES, AND AUDIENCES ADDRESSED

During his five programming days in Lesotho, Embassy Maseru's Public Affairs Section (PAS) arranged: 1) consultations for Dr. Livingston with editors of leading local newspapers and experts on Lesotho's civil rights framework; 2) a two-day communications workshop with Government of Lesotho officials; 3) a half-day presentation and workshop with the local media; 4) a half-day consultation with local civil society and NGO leaders; and 5) several media appearances and interviews with working media practitioners (see below).

PAS successfully worked with Lesotho's Ministry of Communications, other governmental communications and information officers, NGOs, and media organizations to allow Dr.

Livingston access to all major players in Lesotho's information and media environment. His presentations brought modern mass communications techniques to Government of Lesotho information officers. The subsequent discussions, attended by the Minister of Communications, led to the formulation of a new communications strategy document which the Minister will present to Lesotho's cabinet.

The strategy includes important concepts from Dr. Livingston's presentations, including: 1) the importance of the role of the spokespersons at the ministerial level; 2) the necessity of timely dissemination of information from government to the media; 3) the role of media in a developing democracy; and 4) awareness that mutual suspicions between the government and the media should be replaced by a productive, though watchful, partnership.

Dr. Livingston's sessions were located at:

-- The Public Eye Newspaper Offices. Public Eye, an independent weekly publication, hosted a one-hour media consultation (audience: Public Eye Editor and Mopheme Editor)

-- The Central Bank's Lehakoe Club. The Ministry of Communications hosted two and a half days of workshops facilitated by Dr. Livingston (Participants/audience: government information officers, members of the local press)

-- The U.S. Embassy Maseru Public Diplomacy Room. PAS hosted Dr. Livingston's half-day consultation with civil society leaders (audience: NGO's members)

C. AUDIENCE SIZE

Dr. Livingston directly addressed 40 individuals, and reached many more through the mass media (see below). The workshop audience numbers were high as anticipated, though attendance by media representatives at their half-day session was less than expected.

MASERU 00000642 002.2 OF 002

D. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SPEAKER IN COMMUNICATION OF INTENDED MESSAGES TO TARGET AUDIENCE

Dr. Livingston's time in Lesotho hit the mark precisely - he made a strong case directly to high ranking Government of Lesotho officials for openness, transparency, and the free flow of information in a democratic environment. Dr. Livingston's consultation with newspaper editors was well received, and they were very candid in their recommendations. His entire two-day workshop was well received and he addressed critical issues and challenges facing both the government and the media and their lack of ability to effectively communicate with each other. He advised GOL communications officers regarding the implementation of the new media policy and the potential benefits for Lesotho. He spoke convincingly on the benefits of "Freedom of Information Act" type legislation in an open society.

Dr. Livingston also advised media professionals on the importance of acquiring and protecting sources, as well as remaining professional and unbiased. Perhaps most importantly, he strongly emphasized the importance of establishing spokespersons and greater coordinating messages inside of the Government of Lesotho in line with the government's strategic communications priorities.

QUALITY OF IIP SUPPORT

Embassy Maseru is greatly appreciative of IIP's support during the entirety of this program. The lines of communication between our post and Program Officer Kara Breissinger were open, effective, and constant. As a "PD-light" post with limited resources, Embassy Maseru is delighted to have been offered this opportunity. We were in frequent communication with IIP regarding Dr. Livingston's schedule, and appreciated IIP's

arrangement of pre-departure briefings for Dr. Livingston and for putting him in touch with Mr. George Tanbur, another recent international speaker in Lesotho.

F. IMMEDIATE RESULTS/IMPACT

Dr. Livingston's workshops in Lesotho were not empty talkshops or academic discussions. In partnership with the participants, he actually created a communications strategy which has a strong possibility of being put into action. While the full impact of his time in Lesotho is not yet possible to judge, if the communications strategy is passed through cabinet the impact of the program on Lesotho's information environment will be undeniable and undeniably positive.

While highlighting the importance of a government media communication strategy, the need for adequate and timely information dissemination, and good journalistic practices, Dr. Livingston's presentations and dialogue directly addressed two of Embassy Maseru's Mission Strategic Plan goals: 1) Democratic Practices and Systems; and 2) Domestic Understanding of Foreign Policy. This program fulfilled a number of current post objectives, including: 1) supporting and assisting the local media with training to ensure their professionalism as well as impartiality; 2) enhancing the ability of the media to act as an independent watchdog; and 3) increasing attention or awareness in the media and in public of USG assistance to Lesotho. Dr. Livingston reached out to a group of dedicated and driven journalists and government information officers who want to see communication between and government media in their nation become more professional and transparent.

G. PRESS PLACEMENT REPORTING

Embassy Maseru arranged an interview for Dr. Livingston with Ultimate FM, a youth-oriented government-owned radio station. The interview was broadcast live on December 13. Embassy Maseru also arranged for Lesotho Television (LTV), the nation's sole domestic television station, to capture one of the workshop sessions. We estimate the viewership of LTV at approximately 30,000. In addition, the Monitor, a popular local English-language newspaper, interviewed Dr. Livingston. We estimate the readership of this publication at approximately 20,000. The Government-owned newswire service Lesotho News Agency (LENA) and the local dual-language newspaper Lesotho Today/Lentsoe la Basotho also attended workshop and may print articles on it.

MURPHY